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Boston University.

THE QUEST OF THE PERFECT RELIGION.

Baccalaureate Address

DELIVERED BEFORE THE GRADUATING CLASSES OF BOSTON UNIVERSITY, BY

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THE QUEST OF THE PERFECT RELIGION.[1]

A FEW evenings since, as I was walking up one of the main streets of Tokio, I encountered an experience not soon to be forgotten. My companion, who was the American minister to the Mikado's court, was pointing out to me at a considerable distance a large hall, called the Meiji Kuaido, and explaining that though now belonging to the government, it was originally built in a spirit of opposition to Christian missions and was designed to be a kind of headquarters for all who wished to rehabilitate the old religions, or in any way to oppose the spread of the Christian faith. While he was narrating some incidents connected with it we came nearer and nearer, but soon found our further progress blocked by an altogether unprecedented crowd of people, evidently made up of the most diverse nationalities. It filled not only the approaches to the building, but also the whole street for some distance in front and on either side. Upon inquiry we learned that a convention of quite unusual interest was in progress and that all these people which the building could not contain were waiting to learn what they could of the progress of the deliberations within. One man kindly showed us a copy of the call under which the assembly had been brought together. At its top I read these words: "World's Convention for the Definition and Promulgation of a Perfect and Universal Religion." The provisions under which the Delegates were to be appointed, and the Convention organized, were carefully drawn and admirably adapted to secure a most weighty and representative body. Nearly every religion

[1] Baccalaureate Address by Rev. William F. Warren, S.T.D., LL.D., President of Boston University. Delivered before the graduating classes of the University, in Jacob Sleeper Hall, on Tuesday, June 1, 1886. [Soon after translated into Japanese, and published in Yokohama; also into Spanish, and published in the city of Mexico.]

and sect I had ever heard of — except the Christian — was named and provided for. Of course I was at once intensely interested to see so rare a body — the first of its kind in the history of the world. But the crowd was so dense I was almost in despair. Fortunately in our extremity two stout policemen recognized my companion, and knowing his ambassadorial character undertook to make a way for us and to bring us into the hall. The struggle was long and severe, but at last our faithful guides succeeded in edging us into ān overcrowded balcony to a standing-place from which nearly the whole body of the delegates could be seen. Never can I forget that many hued and strangely clad assembly. Nearly every delegation had some sacred banner, or other symbol, by which it might be distinguished. In the centre of the hall was the yellow silken banner of the Chinese Dragon. On the left I saw the crescent of Islam; on the right the streamers of the Grand Lama of Thibet. Not far away was the seven-storied sacred umbrella of Burmah, and beyond it the gaudy feather-work of a dusky delegation from Ashantee. In one corner I even thought I recognized the totem of one of our Indian tribes of Alaska.

On the programme there were five questions, each evidently framed with a view to make its discussion and answer contribute toward the common end, the definition of a perfect and universal religion. The first read as follows: "Can there be more than one perfect religion?" The opening of the discussion of this had been assigned to a great Buddhist teacher from Ceylon. The second question, to be opened by a Mohammedan, was: "What kind of an object of worship must a perfect religion present?" The third was assigned to a Taoist, and was thus formulated: "What must a perfect religion demand of, and promise to, the sincere worshipper?" The fourth, assigned to a Hindu pundit, was the following: "In what relation must the divine object and the human subject stand to each other in a perfect religion?" The fifth and last question read: "By what credentials shall a perfect religion, if ever found, be known?" The honor and responsibility of opening this last and highest of the proposed discussions was reserved to the official head of the Shinto priesthood of Japan, the highest representative of the ancestral faith of the Empire.

As soon as my friend and I could get our bearings, we were pleased to find that only one of the questions had been discussed and acted upon by the Convention before our arrival. We were told that the assembly had been opened by the President designated in the call; and that nothing on earth was ever more impressive than the three minutes of silent prayer which followed the uplifting of the Chairman's hand and eye. After this there had been a brief address of welcome from the Committee of Arrangements, a few words of thanks from the President in response; then a short opening address by the President, and the introduction of the distinguished Buddhist representative from Ceylon, who was to discuss the question: "Can there be more than one perfect religion?" To a Buddhist, there could be, of course, but one answer to this question, and that a negative. But he argued it — as our informants told us — with wonderful tact as well as power. He kept the qualification "perfect" so prominently before his hearers' minds that however accustomed any of them might be to think and say that there may be and are many good religions, none could fail to see that of perfect religions there could be but one. He also carefully abstained from identifying his own system with the perfect religion, and thus avoided the mistake of exciting the jealousy of rival religionists. So complete had been his success, that after a short discussion in which several very diverse speakers participated, a venerable Parsee had moved, and just before our arrival the Convention had unanimously adopted the following resolution: "Resolved, that in the opinion of this World's Convention there can be but one perfect religion."

While we were getting hold of these facts we lost the President's introduction of the second pre-appointed speaker. We soon learned, however, that he was the senior moulvie of the great Mohammedan University at Cairo, a school of Islam in which there are all the time about ten thousand students in preparation for the duties of public religious teachers and chanters of prayers. His piercing eye and snow-white beard and vigorous frame would have made him anywhere a man of mark. Seated after his manner of teaching in the mosque upon a low bamboo frame, clad in his official robe, he looked like a resurrected Old Testament prophet — an Isaiah in living form

before us. At first I wondered if he would be able to speak to so modern a question as the one assigned him: "What kind of an object of worship must a perfect religion present?"

Time would fail me were I to attempt to report with any fulness his rhythmic speech. It was Oriental through and through — quaint, poetic, full of apothegms, proverbs, parables, — but it conclusively answered the question. He made even the feather-decked gri-gri worshippers of Western Africa see that a god who knows much about his worshipper, and can do great things for him, is more perfect than a god who knows little and can do but little. Then arguing up and up, he made it plain to every intelligence that a perfect religion necessarily demands a god possessing all knowledge and all power. It becomes a perfect religion only by presenting to the worshipper, as the supreme object of obedience, love and service, a perfect being. He showed also that perfection in an object of worship required that it be a living object, that it have intelligence, rational feelings and purposes, in a word, that it possess real and complete personality. It must be possible to address him as a personality. He needs to be in every place, to be before all things, in all things, above all things. Limit him in any respect and the religion you present becomes less than perfect.

This was the thought stripped of all its weird and Oriental adornments. But as he expanded and enforced it his eye kindled and his chant-like speech rose and fell, and rose and fell, until we hardly knew whether we were in the body or out of the body, so wondrous was the spell wherewith he had bound us.

He was followed by an eloquent representative of the Brahmo Somaj, and he in turn by a Persian Babist, both of whom argued in the same line with such effect, that when a picturesquely turbaned representative of the religion of the Sikhs gained the floor and moved that it be the sense of the Convention that a perfect religion must present a perfect god, the whole vast assembly was found to be a unit in affirming this grand declaration.

Next, of course, came the third question: "What must a perfect religion demand of the sincere worshipper, and what must it promise to him?" To open its discussion the appointed

Taoist teacher was politely introduced. As his noble form advanced quietly to the front of the platform in the costume of a Chinese Mandarin of the highest rank, it was at once evident that the better side of Taoism was to be represented, — the ideas of the Tao-teh-king, and not the superstition and jugglery of modern popular Taoism.

He began by saying that it seemed proper for him to start out from the point where the preceding discussion had stopped, the Convention had already voted that there could be but one perfect religion, and that this religion in order to be perfect must present a perfect object of worship. With both of these propositions he said he was in full accord, provided only that it be constantly borne in mind that the whole discussion related to a purely abstract or hypothetical question.

"Now," said he, "if a man really had a perfect object of worship, it is plain that his duty toward it would be very different from that he owes to any of those finite and limited and imperfect divinities which we and our fathers have been accustomed to worship. Our duties to these, and their duties to us, are more analogous to our duty to observe courtesy toward our fellowmen and kindness toward those below us. The moment we picture to ourselves a perfect God, the maker, upholder and governor of all beings, lord even of the celestial and terrestrial spirits whom we are in the habit of worshipping, that moment we see that the worship of such a being would of necessity be something very different. As giver of all our powers and possibilities, he could justly demand that we employ them all for the accomplishment of the purpose for which he gave them. Indeed were he a perfectly rational being it would seem impossible that he should require less.

"On the other hand such a being would of necessity possess both the power and the inclination to give to his sincere worshipper the perfect fruit of genuine piety. This can be nothing less than perfect virtue and even exquisite delight in virtue. In a perfect piety all self-conflict, all internal resistance to good, all self-will, must be absolutely and totally eliminated. All fear — even of that perfect Being — would have to be absent; nay, it would have to be transmuted into eager uninterrmittent love. On the other hand, how unutterably would a

perfect object of worship love and bless a perfectly sincere worshipper!"

After many other touching words, particularly upon the woeful contrast between the ideal and the actual in life, and upon the arduousness of the struggle for virtue under every religion, he closed by submitting the following proposition for the further consideration of the Convention: "Resolved, that a perfect religion will have to demand of man a perfect surrender of will and life to a perfect object of worship, and will have to promise him a perfect freedom and satisfaction in the life of goodness."

A Sufi from Ispahan, a Theosophist from Bombay, and various other speakers followed, all very nearly agreeing with the first, but some of them preferring a different wording of the resolution. Various amendments were proposed and discussed, until at length the following substitute was offered: "Resolved, that if a perfect religion were possible to imperfect men, it would require of the worshipper a perfect devotion to a perfect god, and would demand of the perfect god a perfect ultimate beatification of the worshipper." This was unanimously and even enthusiastically adopted.

Question four was now in order. The President rose and said: "The fourth question reads as follows: 'In what relation must the divine object and the human subject stand to each other in a perfect religion?' The discussion of this question is to be opened by one who has himself ofttimes been the recipient of divine worship, and who represents an ancient and powerful priesthood believed by millions to be a real embodiment of the one divine and eternal Spirit. I have the honor to present to the Convention the venerated head of all the sacred houses of the Brahmins in the holy city of Benares."

Calm as his own imposing religion, yet keener than any who had preceded him, the Hindu addressed himself to his allotted task. For twenty minutes he held every eye and commanded every mind. How shall I give you any conception of that captivating discourse? The following is but the barest thread to intimate the great truths touched upon by his master hand.

He began by saying that *some* personal relationship between the worshipper and the worshipped was necessarily involved in the very idea of worship. In this act the worshipper is think-

ing of the object of his worship, otherwise he is not worshipping. So the being worshipped is thinking of his worshipper, otherwise he is not receiving the worship. Here, then, is mutual simultaneous thought. Each has a place in the consciousness of the other. To this extent they possess a common consciousness. In this fellowship of mutual thought they are mutually related, by it they are vitally and personally connected.

This connection may, of course, be of two kinds. If the god is angry with his worshipper, or the worshipper with his god, the relationship is one of hatred and antagonism. If, on the other hand, it is a relation of mutual inclination, — the man sincerely seeking to please his god, and the god sincerely seeking to bless his worshipper, it is, of course, a relationship of amity, of good fellowship, of mutual love. But all religions agree that the first of these relationships, that of enmity and estrangement, is abnormal, one which ought not to be. All religions aim to remove or to transform such a relationship wherever it exists. It is therefore plain that the perfect religion, if there be one, must require and make the personal relationship between the worshipper and the worshipped a relation of mutual benevolence — a relation of mutual love. Nowhere can there be a perfect religion if the man do not sincerely love his god, and if the god do not sincerely love his worshipper.

Here the speaker raised a most interesting question as to degree. To what extent ought this love to go? There could be but one answer. In a perfect religion the love of the worshipper for the worshipped must of course be the strongest possible, particularly as the worshipped is himself all-perfect, and hence all-worthy of this love. So, on the other hand, the love of the worshipped toward the worshipper ought to be the very strongest possible. What then is the strongest possible love which the divine can bear to the human and the human to the divine?

I cannot enough regret that my limits compel me to suppress his discussion of this pregnant question. I can only say that from point to point he carried the convictions of his vast audience until he had triumphantly demonstrated three far-reaching propositions: (1) That the ever higher and more perfect devotion of a worshipper can never reach its supreme intensity until

he is ready, and even desirous, to merge his very will and life and being in the will and life and being of the all-perfect object of his worship. (2) That the gracious disposition of the object worshipped toward the worshipper can never reach its supreme intensity until the worshipped being is ready, and desirous, to descend from the divine form and mode of being and, in an avatar of compassionate love, take on the form and the limitations of his human worshipper. (3) That in a perfect religion the human subject and the divine object must be set in such relations that it shall be possible for God to become a partaker of human nature, and for man in some sense to become a partaker of the divine nature.

Profound was the silence which followed this wonderful discourse. The first to break it was a Professor in the Imperial University of Tokio, a man who, though of European birth, was in complete sympathy with the purposes of the Convention. After highly complimenting the Brahmin speaker, he said that he himself had long been an admiring student of India's sacred books. With the permission of the Convention he would like to recite a few lines from one of them, the Isa Upanishad, which seemed to him admirably to express the true relation subsisting between the worshipping soul and the Infinite. He then gave the following:

> Whate'er exists within this universe
> Is all to be regarded as enveloped
> By the great Lord, as if wrapped in a vesture.
> There is one only being who exists
> Unmoved, yet moving swifter than the mind;
> Who far outstrips the senses, tho' as gods
> They strive to reach him; who himself at rest
> Transcends the fleetest flight of other beings;
> Who like the air supports all vital action.
> He moves, yet moves not; he is far, yet near;
> He is within this universe. Whoe'er beholds
> All living creatures as in him, and him —
> The universal Spirit — as in all,
> Henceforth regards no creature with contempt.

"Now here" — continued the Professor — "here we have the true conception admirably expressed. Because the Universal Spirit is in all things, even in the worshipper, and on the other

hand all things, even the worshipper, are in this Universal Spirit, it is more than possible — it is inevitable — that the divine should have participancy in the human and the human in the divine. Few of the great religions of the world have failed to recognize in some way this basal truth. Even the Shamans of the barbarous tribes claim to exercise divine powers only when personally possessed of divine spirits. In Thibet the faithful see in the distinguished head of their hierarchy, the Dalai Lama, — with whose presence we to-day are honored, — a true divine incarnation. For ages here in Japan the sacred person of the Mikado has been recognized as a god in human form. The founders of nearly all great religions and states have been held to be descendants, or impersonations, of the gods. In like manner the apotheosis of dying emperors, Roman and other, shows how natural is the faith that good and great men can take on the nature and the life divine. Ask India's hundreds of millions. They all affirm that every human being may aspire to ultimate and absolute identification with God. The even more numerous followers of the Buddha hold that, in his enlightenment, Sakya Muni was far superior to any god. Now if such are the conceptions of the actual religions, how certain is it that the ideal, the perfect religion, must provide a recognition of them. I move you, Mr. President, that the propositions of our Brahmin orator from Benares be adopted as the voice of this Convention."

No speaker appearing in the negative, the motion was put and carried without dissent.

Thus, with astonishing unanimity, the assembly had reached the final question upon the programme: "By what credentials shall a perfect religion be known?"

Intenser than ever grew the interest of the delegates. On the answer to this question hung all their hopes as to any practically useful outcome from the holding of this great Ecumenical Convention. Doubly intense was the interest of the on-looking Japanese, for here, in the presence of the world's religions, the highest and most authoritative religious voice of their Empire was now to be heard. Breathless was the entire throng as the speaker began:

"Hail to the Supreme Spirit of Truth. Praise to the Kami of kami — the living essence of the everlasting, ever-living Light.

"Why are we here, brothers from all climes, why are we here in serious search for the one true and perfect Way? It is because He, in whom are all things, and who is in all things — as sang that Hindu poet — is yearning with ineffable affection to be known of us, his earthly offspring, and to know us as his own. Only lately have I learned this secret. Only since my invitation to address this World's Convention have my eyes been opened to the blessed truth. Never before had I been led to meditate upon the necessary implications of a religion absolutely perfect. In preparation for my question I was compelled thus to meditate. Scarce had I addressed myself to my task before I began to see what you have seen, and to lay down the propositions which you to-day in due succession have been laying down. I could not help discerning that there can be but one religion truly perfect; that a religion can never be perfect unless it present a perfect God; that no religion can be perfect which does not deliver man from sin and death and dower him with pure and everlasting blessedness. I could not help perceiving that no religion could ever claim perfection in which any gulf is left unfilled between the worshipper and the object of his worship. Oppressed and almost overwhelmed by these great thoughts, convinced that there was no such perfect religion in existence, nor any credential by which it could be known, I was yesterday morning alone, in a favorite hermitage by the sounding sea, near Yokohama. The whole night I had passed in sleeplessness and fasting. No light had dawned upon my mind. To cool my fevered brain, I strolled upon the seashore up and down, and listened to the solemn beatings of the billows on the sand.

"Here, in one of my turns, I fell in with a stranger — a sailor fresh from his ship. In conversation I quickly learned that he had followed the sea from early life, that he had been quite round the world, and had seen more wonders than any man it had ever been my fortune to meet. Long time we talked together of lands and peoples underneath the world and all around its great circumference. Repeatedly I was on the point of opening my heart to this plain man and of asking him whether in all his world-wide wanderings he had anywhere found a religion more perfect than that of our ancestors. Every

time however I checked myself. I was confident that he would not long remain in ignorance of my character and office, and how could I, chief priest of my nation, betray to him such doubt as this my question would imply. I was too proud to place myself in such an attitude of personal inquiry. And yet perpetually this thought recurred: This man has seen cities and mountains and rivers and peoples which you have never seen, and you feel no humiliation in being a learner in these things; — why hesitate to ascertain if in religion he may not equally be able to give fresh light and information. At last I broke my proud reserve, and said: 'You must have seen something of the chief religions of the whole world as well. Now, which among them all, strikes you as the best?'

"'I have seen but one,' was the laconic reply.

"'What mean you?' I rejoined. 'You have told me of a score of peoples and lands and cities whose temples you must have seen, and whose rites you must have witnessed.'

"'There is but one religion,' he repeated.

"'Explain,' I demanded of him again.

"'How many do you make?' he said, evading my question.

"I paused a moment. I was about to answer: 'At least a larger number than there are of different tribes and peoples,' — but in my hesitation I was struck by the strange agreement between his enigmatic utterance and my own previous conclusion that there could be but one perfect religion. Someway I yielded to the impulse to mention the coincidence. 'Do you mean,' I added, 'that there can be but one religion worthy of the name?'

"My sacrifice of pride had its reward. It won an answering confidence, and unsealed the stranger's lips.

"'Have you time,' he said, 'to hear a sailor's story? More than sixty years ago I was born in a beautiful home hard by the base of our holy mountain, the Fusijama. This very evening I start to visit the scenes of my boyhood, after an absence of more than forty years. My father and mother were persons of deep piety, and from the first had dedicated me, as their first-born, to the service of the gods. At an early age I was placed in the care of a community of priests who kept one of the chief shrines of my native province. Here I was to be trained up for the same holy priesthood. For some years I was delighted with

my companions, with my tasks, and with my prospects. But at length, as I grew more and more mature, and as my meditations turned oftener upon the mysteries of the world and of life, an inexpressible sadness gradually mastered me. I shrank from the calling to which I had been destined. I said to myself, How can I teach men the way of the gods when I know it not myself? How long have I yearned to find the way of peace and the way of virtue! How long have I cried unto all the kami of heaven and all the kami of earth to teach it me! Yet even while I see the good I love that which is not good. I do myself the things which I condemn in others. I teach others to be truthful, but before an hour has passed I have lied to myself, — have done or said what I had promised myself I would not. I love myself more than I love virtue, and then I hate myself because I love myself so well. I am at war within. O who shall deliver me, who can give me peace?

"'As time passed on I became more and more the prey of this consuming melancholy. The time was at hand when my period of pupilage was to end and I was to be given the dignity of full admission to the sacred priesthood. The night before the day appointed for the ceremony my agony was too great for human endurance. Under the friendly cover of the darkness I fled from the sacred precincts of the temple, fled from the loving parents and friends who had come to witness my promotion. A wretched fugitive I arrived at this very port which now stretches itself out before our eyes. Here I shipped as a sailor and sought the uttermost parts of the earth.

"'Years on years I kept to the high seas, always choosing the ships which would take me farthest from the scenes with which I had become familiar. All great ports I visited, many a language I learned. Steadily I prayed the gods some time to bring me to some haven where I might learn the secret of a holy peace within.

"'At last one day — I can never forget it — in a great city many thousand miles toward the sunrise, a city which is the commercial metropolis of the greatest republic in the world, — I was pacing heavy-hearted up and down a massive pier at which lay vessels from many a nation. The wharves were perfectly quiet for it was a holy day. I was sadder than usual for I

was thinking of my useless prayers. I was saying to myself: I am as blind as ever, as much at war within. So many, many years have I prayed and waited, and waited and prayed. The gods have neither brought me to the truth nor the truth to me. In my bitterness I said, The gods themselves are false, men's faith in them is false. There are no gods, there can be none. They would have some compassion, they would regard my cries. Bursting into tears, I sobbed out: I cannot live in such a world. I cannot live. Let me but sink in death's eternal night. And as I sobbed out the bitter cry the rippling water in the dock sparkled in my eyes and seemed to say, Come, come, one brave leap only and I will give thee peace!

"'Just then a handsome stranger, arrested perhaps by my strange behavior, stopped in passing and spoke to me. In words of tender sympathy he asked my trouble. Too weak to resist, I told him all. How beamed his face with gladness! "Come with me," he said, "this very day your year-long prayers are to be answered." I followed, and a few rods distant he showed me what I had never seen before, a floating temple which he had in charge. It was dedicated, I was told, to the great God. And when I asked which great god, the priest of the beaming countenance said: "Have you never heard of the great King above all gods?" Then he brought out a holy book and read to me these words: "O come let us sing unto the Lord; let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation. Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms. For the Lord is a great God and a great King above all gods. In his hand are the deep places of the earth; the strength of the hills is his also. The sea is his and he made it, and his hands formed the dry land. O come let us worship and bow down, let us kneel before the Lord our maker. He is our God, and we are the people of his pasture and the sheep of his hand."

"'Then this strangely joyful man — Hedstrom was his name — told me that this great God did truly care for every man who truly yearns for inward peace. He said he was a rewarder of all who diligently seek him; that he so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son for the saving of all who want to be saved from sin, from self condemnation and despair. He

assured me over and over that this divine Son was both able and willing to save to the uttermost all who come unto God through him. I could hardly believe such tidings. I said, You mean that all your countrymen who thus come to your patron God may find peace and divine favor. "No," he responded, "I mean all — mean you — mean everybody whom this great being has made to dwell on all the face of the earth, for as the Holy Book says: there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."

"'But do you mean that I can call upon him and be delivered from this load I have carried so many years?'

"'Certainly.'

"'And be delivered now?'

"'Certainly. Now — says the sacred book — is the accepted time, behold now is the day of salvation.'

"'It was enough. Down I fell upon my face. Aloud I cried unto the Great God. Through his Son I sought to come unto him. But, believe me, before I could well frame my words, — it *was* the day of salvation. My weary load was gone. My heart was full of peace and of strange new life. I knew that there exists a power which can deliver man and plant within him everlasting blessedness.'

"Gentlemen of the World's Convention, one word and the story of that wanderer is complete. That truant sailor proved to be my own elder brother, proved to be the long lost son to fill whose vacant place my mourning parents had dedicated me to this same holy calling. My heart was broken with a double joy at this discovery. And before we left that wave-worn shore the day of salvation had also dawned on me. To-day I can testify that a perfect religion is not a dream. To-day I possess and can give you its credentials."

— Just at this point in the speaker's remarks the long-continued closeness of the atmosphere and the crushing pressure of the crowd proved more than I could bear. A certain dizziness came over me and I had to be carried from the hall. When I next came to consciousness, it took me a long, long time to discover that I was safe at home in my study chair, and that I was waking from a weird and wonderful dream.

Ladies and Gentlemen of the Graduating Classes:

You came to-day for counsel, for words of wisdom; you have received only a dream.

Be not angry. It is not all a dream. To such as you its interpretation will not be difficult.

The great world of civilization into which you are just going forth is an assembly hall vaster than that Meiji Kuaido which stands in distant Tokio. Within it are assembled in earnest conference the elect spirits of every nation. About its doors hang millions of our humanity, conscious of their own lack of light and truth, awaiting the discoveries of their better qualified representatives. Within, the highest, the never-ceasing debate relates to human perfection and to the means for its attainment. The ever eloquent debaters dwell now upon one phase or force, and now upon another, — but the theme is ever the same, ever the perfection of human beings and the way to this perfection. Some are seeking a perfect industrial adjustment, others a perfect education, others a perfect government, others a perfect social order, others — that they may combine and unify all — are in quest of a perfect religion. To-morrow, dear friends, you are to receive your appointment as delegates to this World Convention. Therein some of you will be called upon to speak, all of you will be called upon to vote, in the presence of a hundred nations. Whether you yet realize it or not, you are to-morrow going forth to speak and to vote for or against the Perfect Religion. The World Convention will insist on knowing what you can tell it respecting its supreme problem. And you will have to meet the demand in a publicity as wide as the world. The days of personal and national isolation are forever gone. Under the same roof with our vanishing American aborigines, within ear-shot of the moans of Africa, in full view of the cruel idolatries of Hindustan, in full knowledge of the hungry-souled millions of China, in the face of Europe's self-sophisticated and gloomy and scoffing agnosticism — in the hush of an Almighty Presence — you, each one of you, are going to tell the world what you know respecting human perfection and the road to its attainment. In doing it, — whether you will or no — you will have to pronounce for or against the Perfect Religion.

For or against. Which it will be I have little doubt. To

yourselves you have long ago admitted, that there can be but one absolutely true and perfect religion. To yourselves you surely have admitted, that the perfect religion must present a perfect object of worship, that it must demand of man his highest devotion, and must promise to man his highest good. Long ago you must have admitted that the highest possible love should rule both worshipper and worshipped, and that this highest possible love necessitates closest possible union in some form of life, human and divine. I but utter your inmost conviction when I add, that a religion consisting of supreme and mutual love between a perfect divine object and a perfectly responsive human subject can need no other credential than that which is given in its own uplifting and life-giving presence.

To-day those for whom I speak — and I speak for none more than for myself — are glad. We rejoice that as you join our growing Convocation and take your several stations in the world's wide field, you hold in your hands — I hope in your hearts also — the one solution to all earth's problems. To you it has been given to know of the divine origin, the divine possibilities, the divine destination of this living mystery in human form. You know the path of deliverance from evil, and who it is that opened it. You possess ideals of human perfection fairer, higher, broader than any of which ethnic sages have ever dreamed. You know of a life which even in its earthly stages is full of righteousness and peace, of love and good fruits. Publish it to the weary world. Exemplify it in church, and court, and hospital, in schoolhouse and in home. Count it the *prima philosophia*, the highest of all sciences, the finest of all fine arts. Let it be the one knowledge in which you glory, the one knowledge by which you seek to bring yourselves and all selves unto glory everlasting.

Apostles of human perfection, apostles of the perfect religion, why should you not enlighten, why should you not emancipate the most distant continents? One sage of Asia, wise with a lesser wisdom, enlightened with a lesser light, has given ideals to millions. Ye are sages — more than a hundred strong. This day I commission you, I charge you, — in Christ's name I command you: Be ye in truth, as He himself has styled you, the light of the world.

And now unto the perfect Teacher of this perfect Way be honor, and glory, and dominion, world without end. Amen.